

Message Text

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41

ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7537

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AMCONSUL BELFAST

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, PFOR, UK(NI), US

SUBJECT: WILSON STRIKES OUT AT IRA SUPPORTERS IN U.S.

1. PRIME MINISTER HAROLD WILSON DECEMBER 17 ADDRESSED PRESS CORRESPONDENTS GROUP IN LONDON, APPEALING FOR THEIR ASSISTANCE IN DISCOURAGING US-CITIZEN SUPPORT FOR IRA. IN TOUGH, HARD-HITTING SPEECH, WILSON CHARGED THAT IRISH-AMERICAN SYMPATHIZERS WERE "FINANCING IRA TERROR, BRUTALITY AND MUPDER" AND EXPRESSED HIS DESIRE TO DESTROY "SPURIOUS ROMANCE" WHICH SURROUNDS IRA. DEVELOPING THESE THEMES, HE SAID THAT CATHOLICS IN REPUBLIC AND NI ABOMINATED THE IRA. HE DREW ON STATEMENTS OF SDLP LEADERS GERRY FITT AND JOHN HUME AND OF GOI FOREIGN MINISTER GARRETT FITZGERALD TO SUPPORT THIS POSITION. IN SOMEWHAT OVERDRAWN ANALOGY, WILSON ASSERTED THAT "THE MEN OF THE IRA ARE TO THE EASTER UPRISING WHAT AL CAPONE IS TO GARIBALDI." (FULL TEXT FORWARDED BY POUCH.)

2. COMMENT: WILSON'S VERY TOUGH STATEMENT TO U.S. PRESS WAS CLEARLY DESIGNED TO ENLIST THEIR SUPPORT IN THE COMBINED EFFORT OF HMG AND GOI TO DISCOURAGE US-CITIZEN SUPPORT FOR IRA. WE WOULD GUESS THAT CORRESPONDENTS HAD

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ANTICIPATED PPIME MINISTER WOULD ADDRESS LARGER DOMESTIC

UK OR INTERNATIONAL ISSUES, AND WERE DISAPPOINTED WITH HIS CHOICE OF SUBJECT. THE TOUGH LINE TAKEN IN THE SPEECH, HOWEVER, WOULD SEEM TO GUARANTEE ITS NEWS-WORTHINESS.

3. FOR DEPARTMENT: WE WOULD APPRECIATE ASSESSMENT OF COVERAGE AND IMPACT WILSON'S SPEECH HAS IN U.S.

RICHARDSON

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